



**EPAP** EXPANDED PROFESSIONAL  
ASSOCIATES PROGRAM

## **CONCLUSION OF THE 2014 SPRING OPEN SEASON, CHANGES TO THE PROGRAM, AND ADDITION OF FALL 2014 OPEN SEASON**

**SUMMARY:** The 2014 spring open season for qualification to the Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP) has concluded. The Regional Bureaus have reviewed the applications of qualified candidates and have made their determinations on which of the advertised positions will be filled. They are working with their posts to schedule interviews and make selections. This cable provides statistics on the applicants for qualification this open season; information on the next steps in the process; reminders for posts on proper selection, titles and required evaluation of EPAP positions; and changes to the process for qualification to the program beginning this fall.

**1. SPRING 2014 STATISTICS:** The interest in EPAP is growing and this open season more family members took the Business Writing Exam and submitted applications for qualification than in any other open season. HR/FLO thanks all of the individuals who served as proctors for the writing test overseas; HR/REE and HR/EX/SDD for their guidance and support with processing and tracking the applications using USAJOBS.gov and the Specialist Tracking and Reporting (STAR) application; and HR/CDA, FSI and the Regional Bureau Subject Matter Experts who served on Qualification Evaluation Panels QEPs. With many applicants selecting more than one area in which to be considered for qualification, the QEP members reviewed over 2,200 individual applications.

**BUSINESS WRITING TEST** – HR/FLO received 913 requests for registration. 758 registered and 706 family members took the exam. Only 27 did not pass.

**APPLICATIONS FOR QUALIFICATION** – 449 applications were completed and eligible for referral to the QEPs. Only 18 candidates did not qualify in at least one area. Public Diplomacy received the most applicants for qualification (335), with

Political (312), Management (302) and Economics (265) rounding out the top four areas.

**2. DURATION OF QUALIFICATIONS:** Qualifications are good for the duration of the program as long as a candidate remains an eligible AEFM. This means that once qualified in one or more of the EPAP areas (Economics, Management, Political, Public -Diplomacy, Financial Management, General Services, Human Resources, Information Management, Office Management or Medical [physician or nurse]), a candidate will not have to reapply for qualification in those areas in future open seasons. Should a family member wish qualification in an additional area(s), s/he must submit an application via USAJOBS.gov including all required documentation during the next open season. See information below in paragraph 8 on changes to the process.

**3. FILLING VACANT POSITIONS:** The Regional Bureaus have reviewed the applications of qualified candidates (those who received qualification this open season and those previously qualified candidates who provided an updated DS-174 directly to the regional bureau representative) and have made their determinations on which of the advertised positions will be filled. They are working with their posts to schedule interviews and make selections. In most cases, the bureau will send post the list of all qualified applicants for a position, and the Post Employment Committee (PEC) will interview the applicants and make a recommendation to the bureau. Community Liaison Office (CLO) Coordinators should sit in on all interviews unless the CLO is a candidate for the position, in which case PEC interviews without the CLO. The bureau will determine the appropriate salary level based on the salary standards (see paragraph 6 below) and send an offer letter to the candidate (and non-selection letter to other applicants). However, bureaus are not authorized to offer a position to a candidate until after the sponsoring employee has been paneled or it is verified that the sponsoring employee has a tour of duty that will permit the candidate to serve a full year.

Once an EFM has accepted an offer, the bureau will send the authorization to hire cable and follow the process for hiring an AEFM on a Family Member Appointment (FMA). The regulations governing FMAs are contained in [3 FAM 8210](#). Information on the FMA is available online: [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21641.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21641.htm)

The bureaus will be able to fill 76 of the 186 authorized positions (the remaining 110 are encumbered) this open season as follows:

<b>Bureau</b>	<b>Total Authorizations</b>	<b>FY 14 EPAP Positions Advertised</b>	<b>FY14 Positions to Fill</b>
AF	<b>23</b>	13	5
EAP	<b>35</b>	31	9
EUR	<b>42</b>	62	20
IO	<b>5</b>	3	2
NEA	<b>25</b>	38	9
SCA	<b>25</b>	37	11
WHA	<b>31</b>	33	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>76</b>

**4. UPON SELECTION:** Selected candidates are required to obtain the appropriate security clearance for the position by the time of their appointment. Those who do not hold active security clearances must inform the regional bureau or post Human Resources Office promptly after their selection. The post or hiring bureau will initiate the clearance process with Diplomatic Security but will require prompt cooperation and input from the candidate. The candidate may not be brought on board until s/he receives a minimum of an appropriate interim clearance for the position.

In conjunction with post's bureau, the post RSO will determine the level of security clearance required for the position and whether the incumbent may be appointed with an interim clearance. The clearance level required for each position is based on the duties and responsibilities of the position and is not based on the individual. As with any EFM overseas, EPAP AEFMs must be medically cleared for post. Applicants are reminded to update their medical clearances in a timely manner.

All candidates must commit to serve a minimum of one year from the date of hire (not the date of the conditional offer) in the position for which they are selected. If the candidate cannot obtain the required clearance in time to comply with the one-year requirement, the bureau will rescind the offer of employment. On the effective day of hire, the candidate's sponsoring employee must have at least one year remaining on his/her tour of duty.

Candidates may be able to serve up to the maximum of their sponsoring employee's tour of duty, provided sufficient funding is available, the bureau wishes to renew the position, and their supervisor documents their performance as satisfactory or better. Because these FMA positions are limited non-career appointments, there is an absolute maximum term of five years.

**5. EPAP POSITION TITLES:** Positions offered within the EPAP Program are professional-level, full-time positions. Position titles for EPAP are as indicated on the advertised list, that is: Professional Associate – (Name of) EPAP Area, e.g. Professional Associate – Economics. AEFMs serving in EPAP positions should not use Officer, Assistant, Acting or any other title than stated above.

EPAP AEFMs must be evaluated annually using form JF-57, Performance Appraisal for AEFMs.

**6. SALARY, BENEFITS, AND ALLOWANCES:** Salary will be determined at the time an offer of employment is made. It will be determined by a bureau HR Specialist based on the advertised grade of the position and the individual's educational background and work experience. The EPAP Regional Bureau Representative is responsible for authorizing the highest previous rate (HPR), if applicable. An AEFM who is hired under EPAP will receive the Foreign Service Comparability pay as a "direct-hire." An individual may not be paid at a grade higher than the advertised grade of the position which s/he will encumber. The EPAP Regional Bureau Representative may offer the position at the Training Level and the incumbent would be able to convert to the next grade after successfully completing 52-weeks at the Training Level. Conversion to FP-04 Full Performance Level (for applicable FP-04 positions) will only take place after successfully completing 18 months at the FP-05 Training Level.

EPAP AEFMs will accrue leave at the same rate as direct-hire employees. Selected candidates may request accrued leave and leave without pay (LWOP) may be

granted at the discretion of the post. All extended leave requests must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor at post and the regional bureau.

EPAP AEFMs will accrue leave at the same rate as direct-hire employees. EPAP AEFMs will be able to pay into the Thrift Savings Plan, FEGLI, FEHB, and FERS. They may also be eligible to receive Non-Competitive Executive Order 12721 Eligibility after 52 weeks of government service. EPAP AEFMs can receive overtime pay but it must be paid out of post funds and must be requested and authorized in accordance with post procedures.

EPAP AEFMs are personally eligible to receive danger pay but no other allowances, differentials, or other benefits (including, but not limited to, post differential, temporary lodging, living quarters, transfer, home service transfer, education, and separate maintenance allowances, advances of pay, home leave, and rest and recuperation). They will not be granted any entitlements, such as shipment of household goods or housing, in addition to those already granted to their sponsoring employee. EPAP AEFMs at unaccompanied posts must be included on their sponsoring employee's travel orders and may not accept Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA) once they have commenced travel to post.

Note: For those who are currently in a Civil Service position, their appointment will be converted to a Family Member Appointment.

**7. TRAINING:** AEFMs hired under this program will be expected to take any related training courses at their own expense before their selection. However, if an AEFM is hired and already working and a post wishes to fund travel costs and per diem for an AEFM to take a course at FSI, salary will continue to be paid during the training period. If an employee has been selected for a position but has not yet gone to post, salary will not be paid during the training period. Training should be planned in conjunction with R&R or home leave travel whenever possible. Applicants should contact EPAP Regional Bureau Representatives directly for information on recommended training for advertised positions.

Some positions advertised may indicate a required or preferred language skill. Language training will continue to be provided to EFM's on a space-available basis only. Individuals selected for this program will generally have priority over other EFM's for language and functional training enrollment, but there is no guarantee that space will be available. Applicants should contact the Family Liaison Office (FLO) at [FLOAskTraining@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskTraining@state.gov) for more information regarding training enrollment.

**8. CHANGES TO THE PROGRAM:** At this point in time there are 186 total positions available to the program. We are hopeful that additional positions may be made available in the next fiscal year. The following changes will take effect immediately:

***I. The Business Writing Test will be discontinued.*** The pass rate amongst AEFM's is very high and the exam does not reflect the writing required for some EPAP positions. If individual bureaus/posts want to ensure a minimum level of English writing skills, this will be noted when a position is advertised and post can administer an English test to applicants for those specific positions.

***II. HR/FLO will conduct two open seasons for application for qualification to EPAP each year.*** The next open season will be in the fall of 2014 and an announcement will be made by cable later this year. All eligible AEFM's interested in participating in EPAP are encouraged to apply for qualification to the program during the open season.

***III. The application for qualification to EPAP will be a separate process from the advertising/consideration for positions.*** Currently many more positions than can be filled are advertised during the open season for qualification and many family members only apply for qualification if there is a position advertised at their post. In the future, positions will be advertised in a separately from the qualification process. FLO will continue to build a pool of EPAP qualified candidates that will allow for a more efficient method of determining which EPAP positions to advertise and additional flexibility in filling EPAP positions that may become available outside of the current annual cycle for advertising positions.

Once available positions are posted, interested candidates will submit a DS-174 (if it has been more than a year since they were qualified) to the Regional Bureau Representative expressing their interest in consideration for position(s) in areas in which they have already been qualified.

## **9. SUGGESTIONS FOR AEFMS ON HOW TO PREPARE NOW FOR THE NEXT OPEN SEASON:**

A. Create or update a USAJOBS Resume. Include all relevant work experience you wish to be considered. You will have to first create an account and then create a resume at USAJOBS. [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov)

B. Request your college/university transcripts. These must be legible and should include degree(s) (if any) awarded and course work completed. Note: these do not have to be official transcripts; unofficial copies of school records are acceptable, as long as they meet the above requirements.

C. If you have foreign education credentials, request evaluation of your credentials through an organization that provides this service. Foreign education transcripts will not be accepted. Foreign education (that is education acquired outside of any State of the U.S., the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, a Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, or any territory or possession of the U.S.) must be evaluated by a credential evaluation service recognized by the U.S. Department of Education in order to be credited towards qualification. Applicants can request an evaluation (most organizations charge a fee for this service) from a member organization of one of the two national associations of credential evaluation services:

National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) is an association of 19 credential evaluation services with admission standards and an enforced code of good practice. [www.naces.org](http://www.naces.org)

Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) is an association of 10 credential evaluation services with a board of advisors and an enforced code of ethics. [www.aice-eval.org](http://www.aice-eval.org)

Credential evaluations are not free and applicants are responsible for the cost of the selected service. The cost will vary according to the complexity of the case and the amount of documentation you can provide. Prior to submitting any

documents to a credential evaluation service, you will also need to obtain English translations of any non-English documents, preferably notarized.

Applicants will submit copies of their foreign education credential evaluations in lieu of transcripts in their applications.

D. Secure a copy of your sponsoring employee's assignment cable/notification listing the AEFM by name as a dependent and post of assignment.

If you have any questions on the recommendations above, please contact [FLOaskEPAP@state.gov](mailto:FLOaskEPAP@state.gov). For general information on the program, please see FLO's website: [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c41174.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c41174.htm).